



# Fire Management News

## *LBJ National Historical Park Solicits Input to Update Park Fire Management Plan*

The National Park Service (NPS) has begun the process of completing a Fire Management Plan that will guide actions related to wildland fire and fuels management at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park. Over the next several months, park staff will be evaluating a number of alternatives for fire management at the park and will solicit suggestions and opinions from affected agencies and interested public.

All NPS areas with vegetation capable of burning are required by policy to develop a Wildland Fire Management Plan that will be responsive to the specific natural and cultural resource management objectives for that particular park. The plan must also contain adequate safety considerations for visitors, employees and developed facilities, since fire is identified as the most aggressive natural resource management tool employed by the National Park Service.

During recent years, state and national land management agencies have experienced severe fire seasons with multiple large fires and extensive loss of property and resources. The plan developed by the park will follow new federal policies that have come from reviews of these events, and will incorporate advances in fire ecology and fire management.

The fire management planning process includes the production of an environmental document that examines various fire planning alternatives for their effects on the human environment. There are three alternatives currently being considered for use at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park:



A Texas longhorn at the Johnson Settlement set against the backdrop of Hwy 290 illustrates the interface of wildland and urban areas that must be considered when developing a fire management plan.

- Continuing the suppression of all wildfires, the use of prescribed fire and the reduction of hazardous fuels (no action alternative)
- Continuing the suppression of all wildfires and the use of prescribed fire, and expanding the reduction of hazardous fuels around park structures and along boundaries
- Continuing the suppression of all wildfires, expanding the reduction of hazardous fuels around park structures and along boundaries, and discontinuing the use of prescribed fire.

Input from the public and other interested parties will help the park determine an appropriate course of action and determine

the scope of the environmental analysis.

The use of prescribed fire is proposed for approximately 450 acres of pastures throughout the park and for a 19 acre prairie restoration area in Johnson City. An expansion of mechanical thinning treatments is proposed around park structures and along park boundaries in both districts to increase the “defensible space” and to decrease the risk of fire moving out of or onto the park.

Issues that will be addressed in the environmental document will include the possible effects of these alternatives on air quality, water resources, invasive non- native plant species and other impact topics that may be identified through public input.

## Message from the Park Superintendent

November 26, 2003

The National Park Service is preparing a Fire Management Plan and accompanying environmental analysis for Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park. The purpose of this plan is to establish future management direction for fire and fire-related activities at the park. The plan will cover the lands currently managed by the National Park Service within the authorized boundary of the park, and will be prepared so as to take into consideration the current land use practices along park boundaries. The goal of this effort is to provide park staff with a strategy for long-term management of fire and fire-related activities while protecting the natural and cultural resources within the park.

The Fire Management Plan and environmental analysis will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and will provide the decision-making framework that analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives for fire management. Potential issues and impacts to the resources and values of these lands will be identified in the Fire Management Plan and environmental analysis. Measures to mitigate potential impacts will be outlined as well. These documents are expected to be available for public review by May 2004. At this time it is anticipated that the final plan and environmental document are to be completed in October 2004.

The involvement of interested parties is essential in the preparation of a thorough Fire Management Plan and environmental analysis. This newsletter serves to provide you with information on the planning process and to encourage your involvement with the project. I invite you to submit your written comments pertaining to this project, and I look forward to working with you on this important endeavor to protect and preserve the unique resources at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park.



Leslie Starr Hart  
Superintendent

# Fire Terminology Describes a Variety of Management Tools

Reading through policy statements and planning documents can sometimes prove to be a daunting task. "Fire use" and "mechanical thinning" are not terms used everyday. In an effort to provide a user's guide for fire management documents, we offer the following definitions of some of the commonly used terms.

**Prescribed Fire** is fire that is planned and management ignited to achieve site-specific objectives under prescribed weather conditions. These fires are used to achieve fire management goals such as reducing fuels build-up or improving wildlife habitat.

**Wildland Fire** is any unplanned non-structural fire that occurs in the wildland.

**Wildland Fire Use** is lightning caused fire that is managed for resource benefits as outlined in approved fire management plans. Wildland fire use is not being proposed as an alternative to achieve resource management objectives at Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park.

**Manual or Mechanical Thinning** is the cutting and removing of vegetation from

treatment areas using hand tools or power machinery. Examples would include the use of mowers to cut grass around park structures or the use of chainsaws to cut ashe juniper (cedar) growing along the park boundary.

**Suppression** is a technique whereby fire is contained and extinguished.

**Fuels** is a term that refers to vegetation or other materials that carry fires and keep them burning. Fuels build-up occurs when vegetation or other materials increase in a certain area, which can pose a situation whereby fires are more easily ignited. Fuels-reduction is a technique that minimizes fuels in a certain area to eliminate fuels build-up.

**Defensible Space** is a buffer of non-burnable materials that is created around vulnerable property in order to maximize the protection of the property from damage by fire.

**Wildland Urban Interface** is the zone where structures and developed areas border pastures or woodlands. Fire management in this zone requires special considerations to mitigate potential hazards.



A fire in the prairie restoration area is ignited using a drip torch. Prescribed fires such as these are ignited only after defensible space is created around park structures and only during specific weather conditions.

# Prescribed Fire Use Continued at Park

Situated in the scenic Texas hill country, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park was first authorized in 1969 to preserve historically significant properties associated with the life of President Lyndon B. Johnson. The 1980 expansion authorized by Congress brought a need to employ a broader scope of resource management activities.

The National Park Service currently manages 594 acres in the LBJ Ranch District near Stonewall and 81 acres in the Johnson City District. The entire park is listed as a nationally significant historic district on the National Register of Historic Places due to its association with the 36<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. In addition, the National Park Service has identified three distinct cultural landscapes – the Texas White House, the Johnson Family Farm Historic Area and the Agricultural Complex – at the LBJ Ranch. One hundred and twenty historic structures that range in variety from the Sam Ealy Johnson, Sr. Log Cabin to the Classified Documents Incinerator are also preserved at the park.



**Descendants of President Johnson's historic Hereford cattle herd graze at the LBJ Ranch.**

In historic times, lightning ignited fires would quickly burn through the native grasses growing under the fire-resistant live oak trees. During his tenure at the LBJ Ranch, President Johnson would periodically burn the pastures in order to eliminate weedy species and return nutrients to the soil. In more recent times, the use of fire by land owners has become more complicated. Highly-flammable Ashe juniper now grows where fire has been suppressed

and numerous homes now occupy the mostly rural Blanco and Gillespie Counties. Fire is still used as a land management tool by ranchers and farmers in the area.

The current management objectives for fire management at the park include the use of fire to maintain the historic landscapes. The protection of human life and property both within and adjacent to the park boundaries is also a key objective, as is the prevention of any unplanned human-caused ignitions. All wildland fires are currently suppressed with strategies that minimize cost and resource damage and are consistent with the values at risk and the safety of employees and visitors.

Since 1980 park rangers have continued to use fire to burn pastures in both districts, with the most recent burn having occurred in 1997 at the LBJ Ranch. Rangers have also used fire to encourage the regrowth of native grasses in the Johnson Settlement as part of a small prairie restoration project. The last burn in this area took place in 1996.



**National Park Service**  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park researches, preserves and interprets the life and heritage of our 36<sup>th</sup> president, and in association with the adjacent Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site, provides a variety of opportunities to experience the local and regional context that shaped the last frontier president, informed his policies and programs and defined his legacy.

**Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park**  
P. O. Box 329  
Johnson City, TX 78636  
[www.nps.gov/lyjo](http://www.nps.gov/lyjo)

**Phone**  
(830) 868-7128

**E-mail**  
[lyjo\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:lyjo_superintendent@nps.gov)

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## We Welcome Your Comments

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park is in the early stages of updating the current Fire Management Plan. Public scoping has been initiated for a conservation planning and analysis process with the intent of eliciting early public comment regarding issues and concerns, a suitable range of alternatives and appropriate mitigating measures, and the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts which should be addressed. Based on the results of public scoping, alternatives for restoring native plant communities, combating invasive plant species and protecting historic landscapes will be formulated and analyzed in detail along with the environmental impacts that could occur. You are invited to comment during this public scoping in one of the following methods:

- **By mail:** Superintendent, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park, P. O. Box 329, Johnson City, Texas 78636-0329
- **By express delivery:** 100 Ladybird Lane, Johnson City, Texas 78636
- **By fax:** (830) 868-0810
- **By e-mail:** [lyjo\\_superintendent@nps.gov](mailto:lyjo_superintendent@nps.gov)
- **Hand deliver:** Visitor Center, Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park

The public scoping comment period extends from November 28 through December 26, 2003. We may be required to release your name and/or address if we receive a request for information that is covered by the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552, as amended). Individual respondents may request that we withhold their address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.





National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park  
P. O. Box 329  
Johnson City, TX 78636-0329

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## EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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This newsletter is being produced as part of the preparation of a Fire Management Plan and environmental analysis for Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park. The completed documents will be available for review on the park website at [www.nps.gov/lyjo](http://www.nps.gov/lyjo). The documents will also be available for review at the NPS Visitor Center in Johnson City. If you would like a printed copy of the documents, please contact the park at the address below.

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Leslie Starr Hart

**Comments? Write to:**  
Superintendent  
Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park  
P. O. Box 329  
Johnson City, TX 78636

## *Open House Scheduled for Visitor Center*

An Open House will be held at the Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park Visitor Center in order to provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the Fire Management Plan alternatives and about the natural and cultural resources preserved at the park.

National Park Service staff will be on hand to answer your questions and address your concerns. Various displays will help present information about the Fire Management Plan. You will be provided with an opportunity to comment on the plan.

We welcome your comments and encourage you to attend. If you are unable to attend, you can also relay any comments to the park by mail, e-mail or fax at the addresses listed on page three of this newsletter.

### *Fire Management Plan Open House*

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| <b>DATE:</b>     | December 11, 2003  |
| <b>TIME:</b>     | Anytime between 3 – 8 PM   |
| <b>LOCATION:</b> | Visitor Center<br>LBJ National Historical Park<br>100 Ladybird Lane<br>Johnson City, Texas |

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

From U. S. Highway 290 in Johnson City, proceed two blocks south on Avenue F to Ladybird Lane, and then proceed one-half block west on Ladybird Lane to the Visitor Center Parking Lot on the left.